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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

drums, the tambourine. Some of the nymphs are almost nude, and some drape themselves in tissues as transparent as though woven of air; some again wrap themselves in mantles in the act of falling off their figures; sometimes two nymphs hold each other by the hand as they float upwards. The different dances, attitudes, movements, undulations and characteristics of the nymph, are produced in every possible phase of voluptuous luxuriance. Then again, all the romance of mythology is limned upon the walls, the ancient divinities are grouped in well-known scenes. We see the education of Bacchus, the story of Ariadne, and the loves of Jupiter, Apollo, Daphne, Mars and Venus; Adonis dying. There were also the heroes of renown—Theseus and Andromeda; Meleager; Jason and Hercules; Achilles and Agamemnon. Nothing is distorted; nothing attitudinizes. Ariadne is really asleep, and Hercules, in wine, really sinks to the ground; the dancing girl floats in the air as though in her native element; the centaur gallops without an effort; all is simple reality; it is nature such as she actually is when she is pleasant to behold in the full effusion of her grace. The work of these second-rate painters of walls possesses the instinct of art, spon-

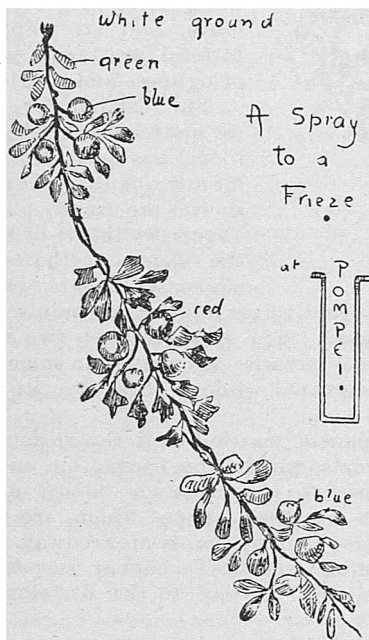


FIG. 6.

taneousness, freedom of touch, and vivid life. The ancients understood the right treatment of nude subjects, in which there is no suggestion of nakedness, the figures being so delightfully natural. An eminent critic has observed that modern statues are not nude but simply undressed.

These paintings will be eternally studied: they give us precious data not only on art but concerning everything that relates to antiquity—its manners and customs, its ceremonies, its costumes, the homes of those days, the elements and natures as they then appeared. Pompeii is not a gallery of pictures; it is rather an illustrated journal of the first century.

While such a system of coloring as that adopted by the Pompeians is highly suitable for interior decoration, it is also equally applicable to the exterior of buildings. The reason why Americans are willing to live in factory-like rows of brownstone dwellings is, that the taste of the people in matters of decoration is wholly uncultivated. The prevalence of the boarding-house system is also largely responsible for the wide-spread toleration of barbarous, or a total want of, decoration in the vast majority of dwellings in American cities. What is everybody's business is nobody's business, and the shrewd house owner would as soon think of committing suicide as having his property deliberately decorated for the benefit of his tenants. If house owners were willing to at least decorate the outside of their houses, what a splendid result would gladden the eye of the wayfarer in this city of living tombs, known as New York. Our climate and atmosphere are quite as bright and clear as that of Pompeii. It certainly would be a vast improvement if the whole front of a brownstone house were decorated with bright colors, and where pillars exist, having the bases, caps and mouldings picked out in strong contrasts. Let the whole house be painted, say a cream color, the bases of the columns in the doorway, say for three feet high, be colored a Venetian red, the caps and lower bases being picked out in red and yellow, the iron balcony might be painted red, the window frames and doors dark green. The architraves, cornices, etc., of the windows might be picked out in red, yellow and green.

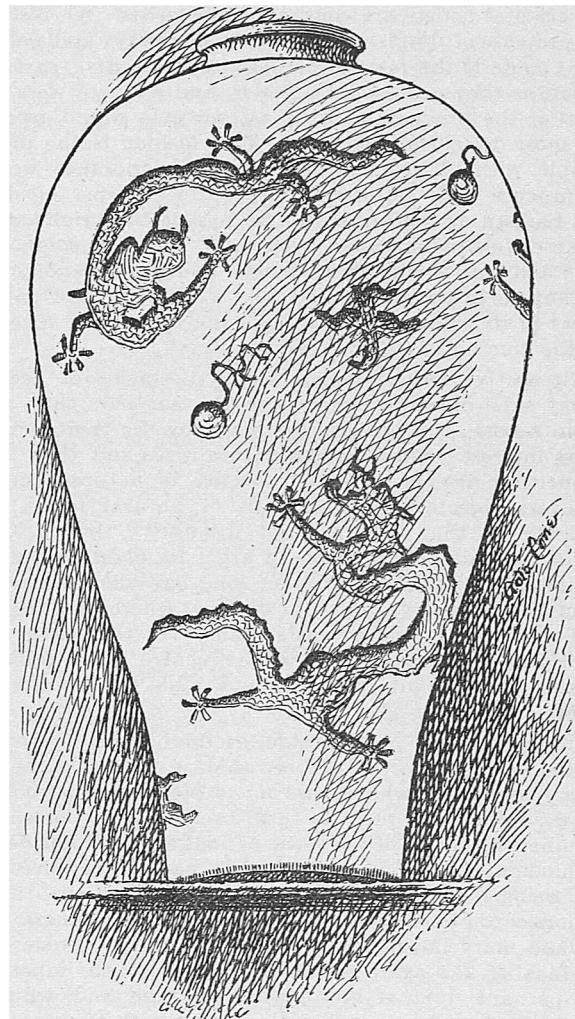
Great variety could be obtained, for no two houses in a street need be painted alike, and all this could be done at a very slightly increased expense on the ordinary cost of painting a house. Pompeian decoration is very well adapted for the treatment of store fronts which always seem so unsatisfactory.

DECORATIVE QUALITY IN ORIENTAL PORCELAIN.

By ADA CONE.

TO the professional decorator, in the course of his agreeable labors—happily described by some one as “varying pleasantly the monotony of blank spaces”—it is not always permitted to choose the purely decorative pieces of furniture, the *petits meubles*. For either the house-owner's limited means or undeveloped taste leads him to do without objects which have no use but to please the eye, or else he may reserve them to exercise his own individual judgment upon—a paradoxical reserve—a curiously infelicitous one for persons without trained taste, seeing that, unlike the judgment, which may serve for selecting useful furniture, choice here turns to æsthetic merits alone.

And it is well for the decorator that he is able to shift the responsibility for a considerable amount of the æsthetic sins perpetrated in the name of ornamental furniture. For this class of objects seems to be oftenest provided on the assumption that the sole satisfaction which the eye takes in an ornament rises from finding something, no matter what, in the conventional places where inutile objects are accustomed to be found; so the places sacred to beauty are filled with bric-a-brac, the candida-



CHINESE PORCELAIN VASE, BLUE GROUND WITH WHITE DECORATION, FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK CITY.

ture of junk shops, and the eye is complacently invited to contemplate vulgarity, and repose itself upon the monstrous, until like the red hot basins with which the brigands used to blind their enemies, the sight of these vicious objects is slowly but surely destroying our latent powers to understand the beautiful.

This is the result of general ignorance in matters of taste. But there is another, a specious cause of misjudgment in selecting ornamental furniture into which the decorator himself may easily fall. It is that of choosing by the standard of the con-

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noisseur. Now, the connoisseur prizes many qualities not decorative, or even æsthetic. For illustration, if the object is a piece of porcelain, he values its age; its rarity; the fineness of the paste; the regularity of the crackle, all with which the decorator is not properly concerned, except in as far as they indicate the presence of the decorative quality of color. Yet so easy is it to mistake the connoisseur's point of view for the right one, and so subtle is the fascination of it when once indulged, that the most orthodox of artists is apt to find himself studying, or ever he is aware, not the decorative quality, but the bottom of his vase, to see whether it has been ground off with apparatus, or worn off by the more reputable attrition of time. The consequence of this is that many people buy porcelain that is not decorative, and many go without because their purses will not afford vases worn off by the reputable attrition of time.

When it affects oriental porcelain, which beautiful product possessing in an extraordinary degree the quality of color, is an unrivalled decorative means, and beyond all competition able to vary pleasantly the monotony of blank spaces, and satisfactory pieces of it, from the decorative standpoint, may be had for moderate sums.

The decorator should choose porcelain for color alone. Form is not to be considered, as it is mostly bad or indifferent. Admiration cannot be given to vase profiles made of concave curves clumsily strapped round the middle, or of compound curve spreading weakly at the base with an evident intention to collapse. The double gourd form of the Chinese is only excelled in ugliness by the triple gourd of the Japanese. The Chinese artists are even guilty of making vases square in section, and they seem unable to form a base to their vases of any character, resorting often to separate stands, which are of exquisite workmanship. But form is lost in a splendor of color which amply compensates it to the most luxurious eye.

The oriental artists are consummate colorists. We Westerners make a pretense of despising color, choosing grays and pale tints, and have made it the fashion to admire decorative surfaces in proportion as they are devoid of color, and if there were no importation of the products of the East our eyes would forget one of their most delightful functions. This fashion is the prudence of a people without art knowledge, whose ignorance would be able to procure with pure color only the extreme of discord. But the Eastern artists know how to mingle the brightest colors and make exquisite harmony, with fairy tones to compose soft pictures; and this is why their carpets and *petits meubles* are the most beautiful in the world, and why a Chinese vase palpitates and glows in its shadowy corner, like the heart of a lover waiting for the coming of its mistress to a tryst.

Its decorative forms are wonderful specimens of decorative art. They subordinate themselves to the surface; they furnish variety in repose; the subjects are made by the treatment to be of endless interest. They are not naturalistic, and that is their merit, but they are the extracted essence of nature. Dull ignorance covers objects with imitations of natural forms, whose particularity is that they are not decorative, but a Chinese vase is an inexhaustible romance of art. Its plants grow in the gardens of the imagination, and the long lasses (*lang lizen*) wander in an ideal country, a land of dreams, where the trees have fruits of gold, and fabulous beasts roam over the earth. Every color is significant; every dragon the centre of a fable; this symbolizing whether interpreted or not, adds the infinite charm of mystery.

In the most costly pieces reside, no doubt, the noblest color, but on the other hand, as has been said, a piece may be costly for other reasons, and what would not do for a cabinet collection may be desirable for a piece of furniture. Modern porcelain and the genuine imitations of the great periods are not to be despised. For a moderate price may be had a satisfactory hawthorne jar, and rising in value from the tens to the hundreds, there are ruby monochromes resplendent with all the richness of the palette, and marvellous *flambe* pieces which have come out of furnace looking like agate; or an old violet; or an imperial yellow; or perhaps, best of all, a piece of blue and white, the "color of the sky after rain," and mingling with its beauty some wondrous and never-ending tale. The blue and white may be had within a great range of price.

There is scarcely a reason in cost why the householder should not discard the bric-a-brac monstrosities barren of sentiment and art, and set up an urn of beauty to the god of the South-west corner of the house, and a symbolic vase to his ancestor in some other sacred corner, and thus doing, indulge himself in the unwonted luxuries of color and sentiment, and help on a national art regeneration, to be consummated in some obscure future. It is a serious question whether the decorator is not shirking a duty in this relation. His contracts ought to stipulate that he select the ornamental moveables, or, at least, that certain objects

very commonly set up as ornamental, but which are not so, shall not disfigure the rooms he has designed.

Of suitable places and settings for Chinese porcelain, I do not mean to speak here. If a room is ugly, as most of our rooms are, a finely colored Chinese vase will afford one point of relief to the eye; one jewel in a leaden setting. But I may recall with pleasure and profit to the reader's memory the picture of an interior decorated by the artist Whistler with peacock feathers for the reception of some pieces of blue and white porcelain.

QUOTATIONS QUOTED.

PART II.

BY LAURA B. STARR.



ARE and deliberation should be used in selecting quotations that are to be painted on the walls, as once being there they are not easy to remove, and an inappropriate or distasteful sentiment becomes a thing of ugliness and a grievance forever.

The fashion for putting a shelf for pottery and delf, are around the room, has provided space and place for any quantity of quotations. These shelves are usually placed on the wall, about two thirds of the way between the floor and the ceiling. The borrowed sentiments are painted underneath the shelf; gold, silver and bronze paints are the medium most commonly used. The space between two windows is often decorated with one's favorite saying, while some go so far as to inscribe the concentrated wisdom of a favorite author on the window sills.

Stripes of Japanese matting, and the various lengths of the Chinese storm coats, which are fringed on one edge are the materials most used for backgrounds. Black and gold paints are very effective on these, stripes which are placed over the windows and doors or hung across an archway. A pretty greeting to the incoming guests is a banner suspended above the door leading from the hallway to the drawing room, bearing these words:

"A hundred thousand times we call,
A hearty welcome to you all."

For sofa pillows, slumber rolls, and the walls of a sleeping room, the following invocations to sleep will be found suitable:

"A land of dreams and sleep—a poppied land."
"And spread around the rushes of repose."
"Be thy sleep silent as night is and as deep."
"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep"
"O, magic sleep; O comfortable bird, that broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind, till it is hushed and smooth."
"Sleep hath its own world."
"Sleep that sometimes shut up sorrow's eye."
"Sleep dwell upon thine eye, peace in thy breast."
"What means this heaviness that hangs upon me?"
"Sleep will bring the dreams in starry number."
"O sleep, O sleep! Do not forget me."
"O sleep we are beholden to thee, sleep."
"Sleep and oblivion reign over all."

"Sleep; sleep;
From the cliff to the deep;
Sleep my poppy land,
Sleep."

"Sleep: Sleep;
In the dews by the deep;
Sleep; my poppy land,
Sleep."

"Acres of sleep-laden poppies."

"Blessed be he who first invented sleep;
It covers a man all over like a cloak."

"With silken cords tie down his eyes."
"O'er my limbs sleep's soft dominion spread."
"I have an exposition of sleep come upon me."
"Sleep in peace and wake in joy."
"Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes."
"One of those passing rainbow dreams."
"What probing deep has ever solved the mystery of sleep?"